

Appln No. 09/891,412  
Reply to the Office Action dated April 8, 2004

**REMARKS**

Claims 5 and 11 have been canceled. Claims 1-4, 6-10 and 12-32 remain active in the case. Claims 22-31 are allowed. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

The present invention relates to a silica gel that has excellent heat resistance and hydrothermal resistance.

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable and allowed subject matter in the case.

**Claim Amendment**

The subject matter of Claim 5 has been placed into Claim 1. Because Claim 5 is indicated as being allowable, it is believed that Claim 1 and its associated dependent claims are now allowable in light of the definitions of the distinguishing characteristics of the silica gel that is produced.

The subject matter of Claim 11 has been placed into Claim 7. Because Claim 11 is indicated as being allowable, it is believed that product by process Claim 7 and its associated dependent claims are now also allowable in light of the definitions of the distinguishing characteristics of the silica gel that is produced.

As to Claim 32, it is noted that this claim is very similar to original Claim 1, except that it contains the more narrowing limitation with regard to the breaking stress of the hydrogel. However, since this claim now also has been amended to incorporate the various physical property characteristics of the claimed silica gel which the Examiner regards as a distinguishing feature of the invention, it is that method Claim 32 is also allowable over the cited and applied prior art. Withdrawal of the grounds of rejection raised under 35 USC 102 and 35 USC 103 is


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respectfully requested.

It is now believed that the application is in proper condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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